

Message Text

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

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SUBJECT: CHINA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

REF: A) HONG KONG 6846; B) HONG KONG 7070

SUMMARY: CHINA'S CURRENT POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST
REFLECTS THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF SINO-US-SOVIET RELATIONS
AND PEKING'S FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF COUNTERING THE EXPANSION
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OF SOVIET WORLD POWER. THE MIDDLE EAST CONTINUES TO
AFFORD PEKING THE OPPORTUNITY TO PLAY OUT ITS
ROLE AS SUPPORTER OF NATIONALIST CAUSES IN THE THIRD
WORLD FOR MAXIMUM PROPAGANDA VALUE AT MINIMUM POLITICAL

OR ECONOMIC COST. CHINA'S NEW OUTLOOK IS LIKELY TO BE MANIFEST IN AN INCREASINGLY FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO THE ISSUES AT HAND AND A CONTINUING EFFORT TO EXPAND POLICY OPTIONS TO EXTRACT MAXIMUM DIPLOMATIC BENEFIT. END SUMMARY.

1. ALTHOUGH THE MIDDLE EAST HAS NO DIRECT SECURITY OR ECONOMIC IMPORTANCE FOR CHINA IT IS AN AREA WHERE THE TWO SUPERPOWERS ARE DEEPLY INVOLVED AND IN WHICH THE PRC HAS SOME POLITICAL INFLUENCE. CHINA'S CURRENT POLICY TOWARDS THE MIDDLE EAST REFLECTS THE CONTINUING EVOLUTION OF SINO-US-SOVIET RELATIONS AND PEKING'S INCREASED INCLINATION TO VIEW THE REGION IN THE CONTEXT OF ITS RIVALRY WITH MOSCOW.

2. IN THE 1960'S, WHEN THE UNITED STATES WAS STILL IDENTIFIED AS THE MAIN ENEMY, PEKING SOUGHT TO MAKE USE OF THE MID-EAST CONFLICT TO POLARIZE THE THIRD WORLD, TO HARASS THE US, AND TO DEMONSTRATE THAT CHINA WAS MORE MILITANT THAN THE USSR IN THE ANTI-IMPERIALIST STRUGGLE. ON A LESS IDEOLOGICAL LEVEL CHINA WAS PROBABLY INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING AN AREA OF CONTENTION BETWEEN THE TWO SUPERPOWERS SO AS TO DISTRACT THEIR ENERGIES AND DETER COLLUSION BETWEEN THEM. CHINA'S MIDDLE-EAST POLICY THEREFORE, EMPHASIZED PROTRACTED STRUGGLE, DENIGRATION OF PEACE EFFORTS, HOSTILITY TOWARD CONSERVATIVE ARAB COUNTRIES, AND MILITANT VERBAL SUPPORT FOR RADICAL ARAB STATES AND THE PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN.

3. AS SINO-US RELATIONS HAVE IMPROVED AND CHINA'S PERCEPTION OF THE LONG-RANGE SOVIET THREAT HAS INTENSIFIED (HONG KONG 6846) THE FOCUS OF PEKING'S CONCERN AND THE BRUNT OF ITS ATTACKS ON THE SUPERPOWER ROLE IN THE MID-EAST HAS SHIFTED FROM THE US TO THE SOVIET UNION. WHILE COLLUSION OF THE SUPERPOWERS IN PERPETUATING A "NO WAR--NO PEACE" SITUATION REMAINS A MAJOR THEME, CHINESE STATEMENTS AND PROPAGANDA ON THE MID-EAST NOW CONCENTRATE ON SOVIET PERfidiousNESS AND "BIG POWER HEGEMONISM." THE SOVIETS ARE ACCUSED OF DEMANDING MILITARY BASES AND PORTS IN THE MID-EAST IN EXCHANGE FOR ARMAMENTS AND THEN PROHIBITING THE USE OF THOSE ARMS AGAINST THE ENEMY (ISRAEL). THEY ARE FURTHER CHARGED WITH SUPPLYING THE ENEMY WITH POTENTIAL TROOPS AND TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS BY ALLOWING SOVIET SECRET

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JEWS TO EMIGRATE TO ISRAEL. IN CONTRAST, HOWEVER, IN ITS STRONG DENUNCIATIONS OF THE RECENT ISRAELI INTERCEPTION OF A CIVIL AIR LINER AND OF THE EARLIER COMMANDO RAID IN BEIRUT, PRC MEDIA MADE NO MENTION OF US COMPLICITY--A LINK WHICH WOULD CERTAINLY BEEN MADE EIGHTEEN MONTHS AGO.

4. THIS NEW FOCUS IS PART OF THE PRC'S EFFORTS IN THE THIRD WORLD AS A WHOLE TO HEIGHTEN FEAR OF SOVIET RATHER THAN US INTENTIONS. IT ALSO SPRINGS FROM CHINA'S CONCERN OVER THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN--AND IN THE RELATED ARENA OF EUROPE--AND THE POTENTIAL FOR SOVIET POWER MOVE IN THE PERSIAN GULF AND WEST ASIA (HONG KONG 7034).

5. CHINA NOW APPARENTLY PERCEIVES THAT THE US AND THE USSR ARE BOTH COMMITTED TO AVOIDING HOSTILITIES IN THE MID-EAST AND THAT A PROLONGED STALEMATE IN THE AREA IS LIKELY TO RESULT. IN THE CHINESE VIEW BOTH EGYPT AND SYRIA HAVE BEGUN TO RECOGNIZE THE LIMITATIONS OF SOVIET SUPPORT AND THE FUTILITY OF SOVIET "FRIENDSHIP." IN ADDITION, PEKING PROBABLY EXPECTS FURTHER NATIONALIZATION OF WESTERN OIL INTERESTS, CONSEQUENT DIPLOMATIC STRAINS BETWEEN THE ARABS AND THE WEST, AND ALONG WITH INCREASED FRUSTRATION OVER THE PALESTINIAN ISSUE, NEW WEALTH AND INDEPENDENT POWER FOR THE ARAB GOVERNMENTS. IN THIS SITUATION, PEKING'S PRESENT POLICY IS TO PROMOTE EMERGENCE OF AN ARAB BLOC WHICH WOULD BE INDEPENDENT OF THE SUPERPOWERS AND ACT AS A COUNTER TO THE EXPANSION OF SOVIET POWER IN THE MEDITERRANEAN AND THE PERSIAN GULF. WHETHER OR NOT THE ARABS CAN UNITE, THE CHINESE APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT BY ABSTAINING FROM DIRECT COMPETITION IN THE SUPPLY OF MAJOR ARMS AND BY MAINTAINING A BALANCED POLICY TOWARDS THE FEDAYEEN AND THE ARAB STATES, CHINA WILL EVENTUALLY EMERGE AMONG THE POWERS AS THE TRUE FRIEND OF THE ARABS.

6. CONSEQUENTLY THE PRC IS CONCENTRATING ON IMPROVING ITS GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS IN THE AREA. WHILE CONTINUING LIMITED SMALL ARMS SUPPLY AND TRAINING FOR THE FEDAYEEN, PEKING HAS TONED DOWN ITS SUPPORT FOR THE GUERRILAS IN THEIR CONFRONTATIONS WITH ESTABLISHED ARAB REGIMES. DURING THE SEPTEMBER, 1970 CLASH IN JORDAN, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CHINESE WERE VEHEMENT IN THEIR DENUNCIATION OF HUSSIEEN'S REGIME, BUT THE RECENT GOVERNMENT-FEDAYEEN CONFRONTATION IN LEBANON PASSED WITHOUT SECRET

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COMMENT FROM PEKING.

7. CHINA'S CURRENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE FEDAYEEN IS ALSO A RESULT OF A MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENT OF THEIR CAPABILITIES AND OF DISENCHANTMENT WITH CONTINUED FEDAYEEN INFIGHTING AND RELIANCE ON TERRORIST TACTICS. THE CHINESE HAVE LONG ENCOURAGED CLOSER TIES AMONG THE PALESTINIAN GROUPS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE PLO IN THE HOPE THAT UNITY WOULD BRING GREATER EFFECTIVENESS. RECENT INTELLIGENCE REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE CHINESE ALSO HOPE THAT THIS UNITY WILL LEAD TO A DECREASED RELIANCE ON TERRORISM.

8. PEKING IS ALSO TAKING A MORE FLEXIBLE STAND ON A MID-EAST SETTLEMENT; IT NO LONGER OPPOSES IN PRINCIPLE A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION AND OBJECTS ONLY TO PROPOSALS FOR "PARTIAL" SETTLEMENT. THE PRC HAS INDICATED THAT WHILE IT HAS RESERVATIONS ABOUT SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 242 OF 1967 IT WOULD NOT OPPOSE A SETTLEMENT BASED UPON IT. HUANG HUA'S LATEST STATEMENT IN DEFENSE OF CHINA'S ABSTENTION ON THE JULY 26 SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION DEFINES PEKING'S PRINCIPLED BUT MODERATE APPROACH TO PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WHILE ACKNOWLEDGING THE GOOD INTENTIONS OF THE DRAFTERS, HUANG SAID THAT CHINA WOULD ABSTAIN FROM VOTING BECAUSE THE PROPOSED RESOLUTION FAILED; TO CONDEMN ISRAELI AGGRESSION; TO CALL FOR IMMEDIATE ISRAELI

WITHDRAWAL FROM OCCUPIED EGYPTIAN, SYRIAN AND OTHER ARAB LANDS; AND TO DEMAND A RESTORATION OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S NATIONAL RIGHTS. IN CONTRAST TO CHIAO KUAN-HUA'S DECEMBER, 1971 SPEECH, HOWEVER, HUANG MADE NO MENTION OF "SELF-DETERMINATION" FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLES.

9. IN THE PAST PEKING HAS VIGOROUSLY OPPOSED THE CREATION OF A SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE BUT IN THE FUTURE IT COULD POSSIBLY BE MORE FLEXIBLE ON THIS ISSUE. THE CHINESE FOR EXAMPLE FAILED TO REPORT OR COMMENT ON TUNISIAN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA'S RECENT PROPOSAL TO TURN JORDAN INTO A PALESTINIAN STATE. IN ANY EVENT PEKING IS UNLIKELY TO ENDORSE ANY AGREEMENT WHICH THE PLO DOES NOT APPROVE, SUCH AS PARTIAL SETTLEMENTS WHICH LEAVE THE PALESTINIAN QUESTION ASIDE. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRC WILL VERY LIKELY NOT WORK ACTIVELY AGAINST AN AGREEMENT OF THIS SORT, IF IT IS FAVORED BY ARAB GOVERNMENTS SUCH AS EGYPT.

10. PEKING HAS NEVER MADE IT CLEAR PUBLICLY WHETHER IT ACCEPTS IN PRINCIPLE THE ISRAELI'S STATE'S RIGHT TO EXISTENCE. PREVIOUSLY
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PEKING IMPLICITLY DENIED SUCH A RIGHT BUT CHIAO KUAN-HUA IN 1971 AND HUANG HUA THIS PAST JUNE BOTH AFFIRMED THAT PEKING IS "NOT OPPOSED TO THE JEWISH PEOPLE OR THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL," A DISTINCTION WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LEGAL EXISTENCE OF AN ISRAELI STATE. CHINESE MAPS OF THE AREA IDENTIFY ISRAEL WITH TWO NAMES: "ISRAEL" AND "PALESTINE." CHINA'S OPPOSITION TO THE ISRAELI THEORY OF /SECURE BOUNDARIES," WHICH IS LIKENED TO NAZI "LEBENSRAUM," IS VAGUE BUT FRAMED SO AS TO SUGGEST THAT ONLY LANDS SEIZED IN 1967 MAY BE AT ISSUE. THE MOST FORTHCOMING CHINESE STATEMENT WAS MADE PRIVATELY IN MAY, 1972 BY CHANG WEN-CHIN, DIRECTOR OF THE AMERICAN, AUSTRALIA AND WESTERN EUROPEAN DEPARTMENT IN PEKING'S FOREIGN MINISTRY. CHANG TOLD BRITISH DIPLOMATS THAT ISRAEL IS A "REALITY" THAT COULD NOT BE DONE AWAY WITH AND THAT THE PROBLEM WAS THE RECONCILIATION OF THIS FACT WITH THE RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIANS.

11. IN SUM, CHINA'S NON-IDEOLOGICAL, BALANCE OF POWER APPROACH TO THE MID-EAST IS COMMENSURATE WITH PEKING'S REALISTIC APPRAISAL OF ITS LEVERAGE AND INFLUENCE IN THE REGION, AND ITS FUNDAMENTAL OBJECTIVE OF COUNTERING THE EXPANSION OF SOVIET WORLD POWER. PEKING WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY OUT ITS ROLE IN THE MID-EAST AS SUPPORTER OF NATIONALIST CAUSES IN THE THIRD WORLD, BUT THIS WILL PROBABLY BE OF SECONDARY IMPORTANCE. CHINA'S NEW POLICY IS LIKELY TO BE MANIFEST IN AN INCREASINGLY MORE FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO THE ISSUES AT HAND AND A CONTINUING EFFORT TO EXPAND POLICY OPTIONS TO EXTRACT MAXIMUM DIPLOMATIC BENEFIT.
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